



Use of K-12 COVID-19 Funding for Child Behavioral and Mental Health Supports

Updated: December 13, 2022

[School Health Advisory Councils \(SHACs\)](#) are composed of students, staff, and community members dedicated to promoting a healthier school environment and community. SHACs do critical work in our school communities that can be amplified with this additional funding resource to support school-based mental and behavioral health initiatives. This funding is provided through the StrongSchoolsNC COVID-19 Testing Program and made possible by a ReOpening Schools grant provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Identifying Allowable Uses of SHAC Funding

Districts and schools are eligible to receive **reimbursement** of up to \$60,000 of allowable expenses to support SHACs engaging in the following activities using evidence-based resources. We encourage SHACs to use the funding for activities that are cross-cutting and may have compounding positive impacts in multiple areas described in this document.

Term

All funds must be spent by the end of the 2022-2023 academic school year, specifically by June 30, 2023, at the latest.

Non-allowable uses of funds include:

- Clinical care
- Food, unless traveling to a domestic mental and behavioral health conference
- Hiring staff
- Gift cards
- Youth Mental Health First Aid (Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund is available to support this training for any school)
- Teen Mental Health First Aid (Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund is available to support this training for any school)
- Purchased of goods or services to be delivered after the termination of the contract (June 30, 2023).

Allowable uses of funds include:

1. School staff workforce training, resources, and professional development tools related to mental and behavioral health. School staff include, but are not limited to, Specialized Instructional Support Personnel, school counselors, teachers, administrators, bus drivers, cafeteria and custodial staff, and contractors. Examples of allowable activities may include:

- Trainings on providing trauma-informed care to students
- Substitute pay while school staff attend mental and behavioral health training or conferences
- Suicide prevention trainings (e.g., [safeTALK](#), [ASIST](#), [Signs of Suicide](#))
- Child sexual abuse prevention trainings (e.g., [Darkness to Light](#))
- Domestic mental and behavioral health conferences
- Trainings on delivering culturally sensitive supports to students of different backgrounds (e.g., Hispanic/Latinx or LGBTQ+ youth)
- Honorariums for guest speaker (limited to \$500 per occasion)

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- Reimbursement of registration and travel cost associated with attending a conference or workshop
- Incentives for participating in training limited to \$50 per person, per occasion.

2. **Support of mental health, well-being, and behavioral health components aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Health model, detailed below.](#)**

- 1) **Social and Emotional Climate.** Linkage to mental and behavioral health: Social and emotional climate refers to the psychosocial aspects of students' educational experience that influences their social and emotional development. The social and emotional climate of a school can impact student engagement in school activities; relationships with other students, staff, family, and community; and academic performance.
 - Examples of eligible activities:
 - Phone applications such as [Rhithm](#) to provide students and staff the opportunity to reflect on how they are feeling via a check-in tool
 - Student mentorship programs like [Peer Group Connection](#)
 - Character education curricula and programs
 - Social emotional learning curricula like [Second Step](#)
 - [MindWell \(Poe Center for Health Education\) Foundations of Wellness](#)
 - Ineligible activities: Funds cannot be used to hire staff.
- 2) **Health Education.** Linkage to mental and behavioral health: Qualified health education teachers delivering formal, structured health education can help students acquire information and skills necessary to make positive health decisions related to alcohol and other drug use and abuse, recognize the cognitive and emotional benefits of healthy eating/nutrition and physical activity, and learn to prioritize mental and emotional health. Students might also acquire health information on these topics through education that occurs as part of a patient visit with a school nurse, through posters, or through public service announcements.
 - Examples of eligible activities:
 - Programs that address harmful substance use as self-medication and teach alternative coping skills
 - Materials for programs that support student coping skills
 - Professional development for health education staff or school personnel
 - Ineligible activities:
 - Funding may not be used to hire health education staff.
 - Funding may not be used for any Mental Health First Aid curriculum.
- 3) **Health Services.** Linkage to mental and behavioral health: School health services provided by qualified professionals (e.g., school nurses, nurse practitioners, dentists, health educators, physicians, physician assistants and allied health personnel) actively collaborate with school and community support services to increase the ability of students and families to adapt to health and social stressors, such as chronic health conditions or social and economic barriers to health, and to be able to manage these stressors and advocate for their own health and learning needs.
 - Examples of eligible activities:
 - Routine mental and behavioral health screening such as [Rapid Adolescent Prevention Screening](#)
 - Professional development for health services staff
 - Field trips
 - Ineligible activities: Funds may not be used for provision of clinical care.
- 4) **Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services.** Linkage to mental and behavioral health: Trained staff in schools and social services are important to protecting the mental, behavioral, and social-emotional health of students.
 - Examples of eligible activities:
 - Professional development for school-based clinical staff such as school

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counselors

- Systems-level assessments conducted by clinical staff
- Skilled consultation by clinical staff with other school staff
- New computers for mental/behavioral health staff
- Ineligible activities: Funds may not be used for provision of clinical care

5) Family Engagement on Well-Being Activities. Linkage to mental and behavioral health: Promoting family engagement so that families and school staff work together to support and improve student well-being. By effectively engaging families, schools can promote a commitment to the behavioral health of students. This relationship between school staff and families cuts across and reinforces student well-being in multiple settings—at home, in school, in out-of-school programs, and in the community.

- Examples of eligible activities:
 - Phone applications such as [AllHere](#) that support parent/caregiver-school engagement regarding student behavioral health
 - Programs that promote parent/caregiver engagement in child well-being such as the [Positive Parenting Program \(Triple P\)](#)
 - Reimbursing family members for their time spent on school behavioral health programs
- Ineligible activities: Schools cannot use the funds for purchase of gift cards or food to incentivize family participation in programs.

6) Community Involvement. Linkage to mental and behavioral health: Collaborating with community groups, organizations, and local businesses that create partnerships with schools to promote student well-being, share behavioral health resources, and volunteer to support the social emotional functioning of students.

- Examples of eligible activities:
 - Community fairs to connect students and families to mental and behavioral health resources including transportation, rent, and equipment for fairs
- Ineligible activities: Any food provided during activities or events may not be paid for with these funds.

7) Employee Wellness. Linkage to mental and behavioral health: Supporting school employees' physical and mental health protect school staff from stress, burnout, and associated behavioral health issues. Supporting the mental and behavioral health of school staff – including teachers, administrators, bus drivers, cafeteria and custodial staff, and contractors – helps to support student well-being.

- Examples of eligible activities:
 - Retreats for school staff that support staff well-being and prevent burnout
 - Therapeutic animal visits
 - [MindWell \(Poe Center for Health Education\) Dimensions of Wellness](#)
 - Creating breast, chest and human milk feeding designated space for staff using best practice guidelines for setting up that space and equipment
- Ineligible activities: Funding may not be used to purchase gift cards for staff.

8) Physical Education and Physical Activity. Linkage to mental and behavioral health: Physical education provides cognitive content and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors for healthy active living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence. A well-designed physical education program provides the opportunity for students to learn key concepts and practice critical skills needed to establish and maintain physically active lifestyles throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.

- Examples of eligible activities may include:
 - Providing physical education and activity for students
 - Providing physical education and activity equipment for students

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- Ineligible activities: Funds may not be used to pay for physical education staff. An exception is made if paying for substitutes while school staff participate in mental and behavioral health-related activities.

9) Nutrition Environment and Nutrition Services. Linkage to mental and behavioral health: Nutrition is emerging as an important component of mental and behavioral well-being. Research has shown a link between diet and mental health in children and adolescents, with healthier diets being linked to better mental health, while unhealthy dietary patterns are tied to poorer mental health in children and adolescents.

- Examples of eligible activities:
 - School gardens and gardening supplies connected to mental wellness
 - Professional development for school nutrition staff and other staff
 - Supporting families in completing food assistance program paperwork to address food insecurity. Examples may include paperwork for school meals, afterschool meals, SNAP, or WIC for pregnant students or students with children birth to 5 years old.
 - Kitchen or school-based equipment needed by school cafeterias (or other places on school property) to promote the purchase, storing, cooking, or serving of healthier foods throughout the school nutrition environment.
- Ineligible activities: Funding may not be used to pay for food or to hire nutrition staff.

10) Physical Environment. Linkage to mental and behavioral health: Changes to a school's physical environment to promote and serve the mental and behavioral health needs of students and staff can positively impact well-being.

- Examples of eligible activities:
 - Adaptation of a room to use for behavioral health programming
 - Outdoor calming spaces
 - Quiet meditation or reflection rooms
 - Evidence-based outdoor education curriculum
- Ineligible activities: Any modifications to the school physical environment that are not explicitly for the purpose of promoting mental and behavioral health.

Technical Assistance to be Provided

SHAC Learning Collaborative (Monthly): NC Healthy Schools and the NC Division of Child and Family Well-Being (DCFV) will host monthly SHAC Learning Collaborative meetings for SHAC representatives. These meetings will offer an opportunity for SHAC representatives to share ideas about how to use the available funding to best serve their school communities. While these meetings will primarily focus on these mental and behavioral health activities aligned with the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model](#), there will also be opportunities to discuss general SHAC questions, partnerships, use of data, and additional activities by SHACs.